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## THE UNITED STATES POLITICAL SYSTEM AND HOW IT WORKS

by

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*Poland has, over the years, frequently been the subject of articles in the British Survey; lastly in October 1955. Recent events, and growing contacts between Poland and the West since the silent revolution of October, 1956, have made it desirable to devote a complete issue to that country. In the following article a historical approach is adopted and the story is brought up to date.*—EDITOR.

## POLAND

THE geography of Poland has dominated its history.

Poland is not an Eastern land but a *Central* European country. Draw lines from the extremities of Europe—from Gibraltar to the easternmost point in the Urals, from North Cape to Cape Matapan, from Land's End to the Crimea. They will intersect near Warsaw.

Yet for centuries Poland was the eastern outpost of Western civilization. Its people had accepted Christianity from Rome, and with it western culture. To its east were the barbarian hordes pressing westwards from Asia. Poland had to take the first shock of their repeated onset, and often beat them back alone. Then the Russians settled, to be evangelised from Constantinople. The religious difference exacerbated the breach between the two nations. It was further widened by the ambitions of the feudal princes. A strong Russia pressed against Poland: a weak Russia yielded territory to Polish invaders. In the 15th century, after the Union of the Kingdoms of Poland and Lithuania, under the Jagellon dynasty, the Polish frontiers ran to the east of the Dnieper, and included Kiev and Smolensk. A hundred years later Poland was the largest state in Europe, ruled by a series of sagacious monarchs.

The social structure of mediaeval Poland had many effects on succeeding centuries. The patriarchal magnates lived in princely style, and wielded immense power. Below them were the *Szlachta*, the minor nobles. This formed a very large class, for all children of all *Szlachta* were noble. They alone enjoyed voting rights, but were so numerous that five per cent of the Polish population voted at a time when only two per cent of the English could do so. Tens of thousands of Polish peasants today are descended from the *Szlachta*.

Yet the political system simply begged for trouble. The later kings were elected—and the ambition of the magnates was to find, not powerful rulers who would control them, but weak princes whom they could control. In the parliament the *liberum veto* prevailed—if one member voted against a measure, it was defeated. This did not make for progress: a single reactionary could deny reform.

The third social class was the peasants, living in conditions near to serfdom. Yet they survived to become recognized as their country's most worthy asset.

The fourth class was a curiosity. Tradition withheld the nobles from engaging in commerce, and the peasants were denied the right to do so. Hence a mercantile class was imported from abroad, mostly Germans and Jews. This meant that for generations the Polish middle

class was almost entirely alien—not only in nationality but largely in creed.

In the course of time Russia became strong and predatory: so did Poland's western neighbour, Prussia. The internal contradictions—and especially the force of the *liberum veto*, the most ridiculous parody of democracy—seriously weakened the country. The gentry refused to vote taxes (which they would have to pay) for defence. Consequently, when in 1772 their neighbours, Russia, Prussia and Austria, formed a hostile alliance, the country was helpless. The Partition of Poland began.

Lithuania fell to Russia in 1795. By 1815 Poland had disappeared from the map of Europe. Prussia had seized the northern and western provinces, and ruled them efficiently but sternly. Austria had secured the southern region, and ruled with casual benevolence. But three-quarters of Poland had been seized by Russia, whose rule was both incompetent and cruel, interrupted by periodic risings that were suppressed with great slaughter. Many of the problems of today emerged in this period. Assuredly the Poles have no cause to love either Germans or Russians. But they learned one important lesson—that when Russians and Germans were enemies, then Poland was safe: but when Russians and Germans were friends, then Poland was in grave danger. The country was the grist between two powerful millstones.

### **Poland Arises Again**

A fervent nationalist—himself a convert from socialism—saw that Poland could only be reborn if *both* Germany and Russia were defeated. Hence Pilsudski supported the war which began in 1914, and saw its possibilities well in advance of the other European leaders. By 1918 his dream was realized: neither the Germans nor the Russians being able to prevent it, an independent Poland was re-established.

True, the new country teemed with problems. It had been devastated by war, it boasted three currencies and three legal systems, and its eastern frontiers were undefined.

Those with Germany had been allocated on the basis of its ancient boundaries—including the mis-named Danzig 'Corridor,' which had always been Polish territory until Prussia seized it, and which still had a largely-Polish population. Moreover, after a plebiscite, Poland was allocated part of Upper Silesia. But in the east was confusion. That frontier had never been settled for long; as we have seen, it once stretched far into Russia.

### **Rout of the Red Army**

In the summer of 1920 the Red army was gathering its strength, proposing to settle the matter by force. This was not its only objective. "The way to world revolution lies over the corpse of Poland," declared one of the Soviet Commanders.

The Western Allies were weary of war. In the hope of stopping the fighting, they requested the Bolsheviks and the Poles to withdraw their

armies 10 kilometres from a line which some British Foreign Office advisers had been suggesting as a boundary between purely Polish and mainly Bielo-Russian areas. Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, having accepted this suggestion, the proposed armistice line became known as the "Curzon Line."

But neither the Bolsheviks nor the Poles were in any mood for compromise. The idea of the Curzon Line as an armistice boundary was brushed aside, and the battle began. On the 10th August Pilsudski counter-attacked. The Poles won. Now they could dictate their eastern frontier, which they fixed about 200 miles east of the Curzon Line. Historically their claims to this were well-founded, for the Polish frontiers had once run much further to the east. Yet the new Poland had now acquired considerable Ukrainian and Bielo-Russian minorities.

The Russian leaders today constantly appeal to Lenin as their prophet. Hence it is worth while recalling that Lenin declared the Curzon Line to be 'unfair to the Poles,' and at one time suggested a frontier actually to the *east* of that finally demarcated.

### **Nineteen Years of Independence ended by Another Partition**

With her frontiers settled, Poland could now turn her attention to internal affairs. A liberal constitution was drawn up, based upon fully democratic elections—elections so free and wide, indeed, that twenty-seven parties competed. The resultant parliament was no more than a confused debating society. Innumerable problems remained to be solved—but the parties could only argue bitterly with each other.

Such chaos leads inevitably to dictatorship. By 1926 Pilsudski had become the virtual ruler of Poland. His methods were authoritarian rather than democratic, but he did get things done. The progress of Poland began.

The small industry of the country began to develop. Many of the great estates were broken up to form peasant farms, many of them too small. Pilsudski's great difficulty was economic: the lack of capital. Poland secured none of the loans which poured into her late enemy, Germany, and, with the accustomed threats still to right and left, Pilsudski maintained a large army.

Even in his own country Pilsudski had many opponents, but they recognized his achievements. His successors had neither his prestige nor his ability. And conditions in Europe were rapidly changing. Hitler's Germany was re-arming, and the Nazis made no secret of their intention to march eastwards. Five times they approached Poland to suggest an alliance against Russia: the Polish leaders declined; they did not pretend to like Russia, but they had a pathetic hope that Poland might escape the war. Instead came the one situation which they dreaded: Hitler and Stalin, having snarled at each other for years, suddenly made a pact of friendship. It was suspected at the

<sup>1</sup> That part of the present Soviet-Polish frontier which runs north and south follows approximately this line: it was not, however, traced further south than the northern border of Galicia.



time, and confirmed later, that the pact included yet another Partition of Poland.

Danzig, allocated to Poland as a free port, served as Hitler's pretext. Hitler did not believe that Britain and France would act, despite their promises. True, they had no means to accomplish much so far away, but they went to war. In a few weeks Poland was overrun by the Nazi armies. At the height of the battle the Russians marched in and seized territory as they had agreed on with Hitler; Stalin's line of demarcation followed approximately the Curzon Line which Lenin had decried. Poland again disappeared from the map of Europe. "Nothing is left of this ugly offspring of the Versailles Treaty," exclaimed the exultant Molotov.

### **Poland After Defeat**

Poland was beaten, but her people fought on. Tens of thousands of men escaped via Hungary and Rumania, to form a valuable reinforcement to the Western armies. (Polish pilots shot down one-tenth of all the German aircraft destroyed during the Battle of Britain). A Polish government-in-exile was formed in France, later to be transferred to England.

Even in their own country the Poles fought on. At first their resistance could only be desultory, but gradually it was organized as the Home Army. A council represented the government-in-exile, with which it was in constant touch. The cost of resistance was heavy. The Germans took hostages and shot them on the slightest provocation. Today every other street in Warsaw has a memorial to those who perished in it: an improvised and public place of execution. The Nazis reached their lowest depths of depravity in Poland.

Their bitterest spleen was reserved for the Jews, who numbered one-tenth of the Polish population—some the descendants of those invited in as traders, the others expelled by the Tsars from Russia. It is estimated that nearly three million Polish Jews perished, most in the appalling death chambers of the concentration camps. Scarcely a quarter of a million survived. Apart from losses in battle, the total Polish dead numbered more than two million.

In June, 1941, as everybody except Stalin expected, Hitler turned on his Russian ally. At once the status of the Poles was changed: hitherto the Russian yoke had not been light, and hundreds of thousands of Poles had been exiled to Siberia.

Now it was agreed that the Polish prisoners should be evacuated to the West by way of Persia, to fight alongside the British army. Those who got away from Russia did indeed fight with great courage and determination: they had much to avenge.

Then occurred an episode of which the last has not yet been heard. Officers were needed for the new formations, but very few were returned by Russia. The Germans announced that they had discovered mass graves of thousands of Polish officers at Katyn.

The Poles were appalled. In the evidence went to show that the officers had been murdered by the Russians before the Soviet Union entered the war. The Polish government suggested an enquiry by the International Red Cross. Stalin adamantly refused. He must have

known what the findings must be. Save for infatuated Communists, everybody now knows that the Soviet Government was guilty of the Katyn massacre.

Moreover, Stalin had very different plans. He knew that the Poles and their government had no more reason to love him than they had Hitler. Further, he was quite certain that they would never agree to the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement to partition Poland, the Soviet share of which he was determined to retain. So he decided to break off relations with the Polish Government in London and to set up a pliant and subservient government in its place.

This was difficult. Before the war the Polish Communist Party had been disbanded by the Comintern and most of its leaders 'liquidated.' However, he found enough sycophants to found a 'Union of Polish Patriots,' later to be imposed on Poland as a government. Scarcely one of its members had ever been heard of in Poland.

Now the tragedy neared its consummation. The legitimate Polish government-in-exile was denounced as 'Fascist reactionaries.' By this time General Sikorski, who had headed that government and fought Hitler while Stalin supported him, had died in an aircraft accident. His successor, M. Mikolajczyk, was a peasant leader, son of a farm labourer, who had opposed Pilsudski's autocracy—scarcely a 'Fascist reactionary'.

The attitude of Britain and America was weak. Apparently the leaders were afraid that Stalin might make yet another pact with Hitler, and retire from the war. Stalin assured Churchill that he 'was resolved on the creation and maintenance of a strong, integral, independent Poland,' but nobody insisted on a definition either of the word 'independent' or of 'democratic.'

## Discussion on the Future of Poland

Poland was discussed at the Teheran Conference of 1944. Churchill's subsequent apologia made it clear that the eastern Polish provinces were to be abandoned to Russia—not only those with Ukrainian or Bielo-Russian majorities, but all the land as far back as "the so-called Curzon Line, which attempted to deal, at any rate partially, with the problem." However, both he and Stalin agreed that Poland would receive compensation "at the expense of Germany both in the north and in the west."

With bitter hearts the Poles realized that the British and Americans had abandoned them under the cover of pious aspirations. By now the Russians were driving the Germans from Poland—a Polish corps with Russian officers was also in action. Yet the Russians made it quite clear that the U.S.S.R. would annex the area east of the line fixed by agreement between Stalin and Hitler, and now endorsed by their allies: and that they were about to impose a puppet government on the rest of Poland.

It was soon obvious, indeed, that Soviet nominees represented little but themselves and their masters. The Polish resistance movement had been a serious nuisance to the Germans, and might now be turned against the Russians. The Soviet realists now recognized that

their Polish government needed 'strengthening.' They sent an invitation to M. Mikolajczyk to go to Moscow.

Unlike some of his fellow leaders, he realized that territorial concessions were inevitable, but he was determined to press for the retention of such Polish cities as Lwow. His mission was however interrupted by another tragedy.

### **The Tragedy of the Warsaw Rising**

At the order of the government-in-exile, the Polish Home Army had collaborated with the advancing Russians. Now the Soviet armies approached Warsaw. On July 29th, 1944, the Russian radio broadcast a stirring appeal to the Poles. "People of Warsaw, the time for the last battle has come! Deal a death-blow to the beast of Prussian militarism! Fight in the streets, in the factories, in the houses!"

The Poles rose in revolt, captured the centre of Warsaw, and ruptured German communications. But the Home Army, under General Bor-Komorowski, was only feebly armed. And, to its amazement, the Russians under Rokossowsky halted their advance. Churchill and Roosevelt were as amazed as the Poles when the Russians refused to 'recognize' the rising, which was not of course under Communist leadership. Not only did the Russians refuse to aid the Poles, but they refused permission for British, Polish and American aircraft flying supplies from Italy to land in Russia to refuel, a decision which sent hundreds of gallant men to their deaths. The East-West alliance was indeed fragile.

A month later the Russians reconsidered their decision and began to send aid to Warsaw. It was far too little and far too late. The Poles had indeed fought in the streets, factories and houses. By the 63rd day of battle Warsaw was a shattered city of the dead. It is estimated that more than 200,000 Poles perished in the siege or in the subsequent German retaliation. This included the systematic destruction of the rest of Warsaw.

In Moscow Mikolajczyk failed to obtain the slightest concession, and resigned on his return to London. He was succeeded by the Polish Socialist leader, Arciszewski, who had fought along with Lenin against the tyranny of the Tsars. He was a trustful man. The Russians promptly ignored his government, and installed their own puppets. The 'free and independent' Poland promised by Stalin was obviously to be little more than a Russian province.

Then, as the Russians swept the German armies from Western Poland, the Allied leaders met at Yalta in February, 1945. They now proceeded to "settle" the problem of Poland. The eastern frontier was to follow substantially the Curzon Line, to the south of which Lwow and its surroundings were allocated to the Soviet Union. The western frontier was not settled, but the promise was reiterated that Poland must receive "substantial accessions of territory" from Germany. The Russian-installed Provisional Government was accepted as the ruling authority, but was to be broadened by the inclusion of democratic leaders from the Poles in exile.

At the San Francisco Conference, which met in April 1945 to set up the "United Nations," Molotov casually admitted at a cocktail



party that the Soviet Government had arrested sixteen leaders of the Polish Underground with whom the British had persuaded them to negotiate in Moscow. The only Allied country not represented at the Conference was Poland, the first to take up arms. Despite this perfidy, Mikolajczyk, feeling it his patriotic duty to attempt to rally his Peasant Party and strive for the survival of democracy, returned to Warsaw—the only prominent leader who did so. He led a precarious existence, while his party was progressively paralyzed by Communist terrorism and trickery, till he wisely made his escape in October 1947, just as he was about to be arrested.

### **Poland at the end of the War**

Germany was defeated, and the victors gathered at Potsdam to decide the future of Europe. They confirmed the Yalta agreement, and 'noted with pleasure' that the Polish puppet government had been broadened by the inclusion of Mikolajczyk and a few other non-Communist Poles. They did not reach a decision on the western frontier of Poland, but found that, though no peace treaty had been signed, a Polish administration was being rapidly set up in erstwhile German territory as far as the rivers Oder and Western Neisse. Thus was born the problem which could so easily lead to another war.

The first ideas of the Polish government-in-exile, under General Sikorski, had been more modest. They were anxious to straighten, shorten and strengthen the Polish-German frontier—as a protection against any further German aggression. Hence they proposed to acquire East Prussia, Upper Silesia, and a coastline as far as Kolberg. At that period the Poles assumed that Stalin had abandoned the pact he made with Hitler for the partitioning of Poland, and that the original eastern frontier would stand—or at most would suffer minor modifications made by agreement. The Polish attitude towards western expansion was stiffened when it became clear that Russia was determined to retain the eastern provinces of Poland, and by the hatred invoked by the shocking severity of the German occupation.

### **The Oder-Neisse Territories**

The whole of the responsibility for the new frontiers cannot be placed on the Russians, who were in physical control of the whole area, and the Poles. Britain and U.S.A. agreed with the principle of compensation to Poland, recognizing that this would necessitate the expulsion of millions of Germans from their homes. (Stalin told Churchill that they had left already, fleeing before the Red Armies, but he was over-optimistic, ill-informed—or inaccurate). The disagreement had been not about the principle that Poland was to be compensated by German land but about its extent. The early conferences had never agreed about the extent of this compensation; but while the Western leaders were vague as to whether the Western or Eastern Neisse should be the boundary, Stalin had decided on the Western or Lusatian Neisse, and before the Potsdam Conference began he had actually given this territory to the Poles. Poland also received the port of Stettin, and the southern half of East Prussia—Russia taking the northern portion. The German populations were

uprooted and sent to western Germany, which was already in the utter confusion of defeat. Both Churchill and Roosevelt had agreed with Stalin that Poland must receive 'substantial accessions' of German territory, and that the German population should be expelled. The only qualification made by the West—and this late in the day—was on the question of the Western or Eastern Neisse river as a suitable frontier south of the agreed Oder. Hence the Poles were naturally annoyed when Churchill declared in his Fulton speech (March, 1946), "The Russian-dominated Polish government has been encouraged to make enormous and wrongful inroads upon Germany."

### **The New Poland**

In the meantime, the Poles of the eastern provinces were also being compulsorily moved, to be re-settled in the lands requisitioned from Germany. In the east Poland lost 69,500 square miles to Russia, and in the north and west gained 40,000 square miles from Germany. The 1939 area of Poland, 150,000 square miles, was now reduced to little over 120,000.

The Ukrainian and Bielo-Russian minorities were now incorporated within the Soviet Union, and only a pathetic remnant of the Jewish population survived. (Towards the end of the Stalin period there was a considerable exodus of the remaining Jews to Israel.) Allowing for the terrible war casualties, the population of Poland had been reduced from 35 to 25 million.

One important consequence of the territorial changes and transfers of population was that Poland since 1945 has been almost entirely homogeneous in race and religion. The nation as a whole is Catholic. It has never been torn by the Protestant-Catholic conflict, of which the religious wars of the 16th century left such bitter legacies in the Germanies, Bohemia and Hungary. The Communists therefore never had the opportunity to exploit divisions between Christians as they have done elsewhere. It was necessary to proceed more cautiously in their war upon religion, and, despite twelve years of progressive efforts to obstruct and weaken the Church, culminating in the arrest of the Primate, they have been obliged, as we shall see, at least temporarily to admit defeat.

### **Economic Consequences**

Poland's economic losses and gains were too complex to evaluate exactly. The country had lost two-thirds of its production of crude oil, but its coal resources were almost doubled. In Upper Silesia it had obtained important mineral resources. Its other gains were in electric power, and generally its industrial gains far outweighed its losses.

Another gain deserves to be stressed. Before 1939 Poland's access to the sea was restricted to the narrow strip misnamed the 'Polish Corridor'—the 'Polish Throat' would have been a better name. Now Poland received an adequate seaboard of more than 200 miles, with three major ports—Danzig, Gdynia and Stettin.

Agriculturally, though Poland lost extensive forests and one region of rich black earth, her gains far outweighed such losses. The Oder-Neisse provinces, though not the most fertile regions of Germany, on

the average were better than those Poland had lost. Their acquisition did at least give the Poles an opportunity of solving one urgent problem—over-population in the villages. A peasant farmer might have four sons: one would take over the farm, one might find employment in the towns, but the other two had to stay at home, providing unnecessary labour—in effect, concealed unemployment. The new territories, and the industries of Silesia, offered many opportunities for such surplus people.

Nevertheless, the new acquisitions were in a shocking state after the devastation and looting of war. 30% of the houses had been destroyed, and 90% of the livestock lost. It was natural that the Communist government should take over many of the big estates as State farms, to the disappointment of the peasants—who wanted to be independent, not labourers. Nevertheless, more than 400,000 individual holdings were established in the Western territories, and the abandoned land and wilderness of weeds was brought under cultivation with UNRRA and government aid. Similarly, the industry of Upper Silesia, though suffering from war devastation and Russian removal of machinery, lack of capital, and bureaucratic mismanagement, has proved a valuable asset to the Polish economy, now better balanced than ever before. Yet the pleasure of the Poles was damped by the thought of the Russian domination.

### POST-WAR POLAND

The political development of Poland followed a line with which we are now familiar.

The Communist Party of Poland scarcely existed—it had been dissolved by the Moscow Politburo in 1937, and most of its leaders had been liquidated. Now its former members were hastily summoned, and opportunists hurried to jump on to the band wagon. The party was enlarged by a change of name; it became the Polish Workers' Party (P.P.R.)—but this was entirely Communist-dominated. The title was deliberately chosen to avoid any mention of Communism—which in Poland meant, and still means, Russian domination.

The Polish Socialist Party (P.P.S.) was compulsorily brought into line. Two other parties permitted to exist were the Democratic Party (P.S.D.) and Peasants Party (P.S.L.). Directly or indirectly the Communists controlled them all, supplying the leaders—and allocating to them only a minority of seats in the 'arranged' parliamentary elections. The government depended entirely on Soviet favour.

The Russians were inclined to take away with one hand what they gave with the other. Although the Oder-Neisse provinces had been allocated to Poland, the Russians treated them as enemy territory, and looted them thoroughly before handing them over. Foreign armies are seldom popular, and some of the Russian troops were poor advertisements for their creed. A new word appeared in the Polish language: a peasant who had lost anything would say: "It was 'Russianed'."

Recovery from the shocking devastation of the war was naturally slow. For the first few years the advance of Communism was, of necessity, hesitant, for the main efforts had to be devoted to

restoring some sort of economy. But by 1948 conditions were more tolerable—the Poles at least had enough to eat. The rest of the large estates had been broken up, to the satisfaction, at first, of the peasants who shared in them. The trouble was the loss of machinery and live-stock during the war, but UNRRA aid had helped to overcome this.

Nationalisation of industry was no novelty in Poland—many State enterprises existed even before 1939—when the government controlled 70% of the iron production, 30% of the coal output, the whole of potash industries, a large part of the metal industries, and a complete monopoly of shipping, aviation, matches, alcohol and lotteries. Now *all* factories employing more than fifty workers were commandeered without compensation.

### **The Turn of the Communist Screw**

In 1948, with the situation easier, the more fervent Communists yearned for action. Most of the smaller factories were nationalised. The peasants were urged to form collective farms on the Soviet model. The exhortations had little effect, until economic pressure was applied; then it became difficult for an individual small farmer to exist. Altogether just over 10,000 collective farms were established. In addition there were large numbers of State farms, on which the peasants worked as labourers.

In the succeeding years, at Soviet insistence, the process of Communisation was rapid. In 1948 the position became almost painfully obvious—it was to follow the Russian example, and to serve the Soviet economic system. New industries, mostly heavy, were founded to fit into the Russian plan but they conferred little or no benefit on Poland; for their prices were quite uneconomic. Polish coal had to be supplied to Russia at considerably less than the cost of its production.

Yet another episode of 1948 was to have very different effects. One of the Polish Communist leaders was Wladislaw Gomulka; an able and energetic man, he was made responsible for the Oder-Neisse provinces, or Western Territories, as they were now called. He was an ardent and tested Communist, but he was also a Pole—he wanted a Communist Poland, not a mere province of Communist Russia. He was greatly influenced by the stand against Stalin's imperialism made by Tito of Yugoslavia. But he could not copy this in Poland, where the Russians held one decisive argument missing in Yugoslavia—an army. Gomulka lost Stalin's confidence, and the Polish sycophants promptly turned on him. His descent was very rapid—from Deputy Prime Minister to jail.

The history of Poland since 1945 depended entirely upon that of Russia. There was no pretence that Poland had an independent foreign policy, and internally the government slavishly followed Russian directives. These comprised everything from a secret police to the Five Year Plans.

### **The Economy and Growing Distress**

Poland already had a modest industry. The textiles of Lodz were famous, Poznan had heavy engineering works, and the Polish section



of Upper Silesia included important mines of coal and metals, with furnaces, steelworks and rolling mills. There were useful chemical, electrical, glass, pottery and building materials industries, and Poland manufactured most of her own weapons.

Then, when the Nazi menace became clearer, the government established the C.O.P., or Central Industrial Area, in a triangle within the confluence of the rivers Vistula and San—for the heavy industry of Upper Silesia was hopelessly exposed to a German attack. New factories were built, the mountain streams further south were tapped for power, and there was even a direct supply of earth gas from the small Polish oilfield. Yet only 19.4% of the Poles were engaged in industry: only 27% lived in towns—Poland was overwhelmingly a land of villages.

Most of the industries remained within the revised post-war frontiers, and to these were added the considerable resources of the Oder-Neisse provinces. As the Germans (save for selected technicians) had been expelled, the factories provided employment for large numbers of Polish immigrants. At first there was much confusion, for a peasant does not become a mechanic in a week: yet the Poles surpassed themselves by the speed with which they settled down to industrial life.

But the pace was too rapid. It was a colossal task to restore the existing factories, many of them devastated by war or looted by the Russians. Yet the sacred Plans demanded more and bigger factories. It was the Russians, not the Poles, who decided what these should be—ancillary to the Soviet economic system. The Poles gained little save labour: only a minority of the new plants produced goods essential to themselves: the bulk of their products went to Russia at prices advantageous to the purchaser. What are commonly known as 'consumer goods' were neglected.

The Polish economy was thus weakened by over-development of heavy industry, and by the Russian policy of "milking" its satellites. (It would be very interesting to imagine the state of the satellites had the Soviet Union been not greedy but generous).

### **Uncomfortable Alliance**

A third disadvantage was that the Poles were required to maintain a large army. Yet the Russians, wisely enough, did not trust it. Their leaders might proclaim the new but indissoluble union between the two neighbours, but they realized quite well that Poland's traditional hatred of Russia still had a powerful influence on the Polish mind. If war came, who would guarantee that the Polish army would fight for the 'correct' side? So in 1950 the Russians decided to take over its direct control.

They had the means at hand. Their Marshal Rokossowski had actually been born in Warsaw, when Poland was a Russian province, and therefore might claim Polish nationality. He took a quick course in the Polish language, and came to Poland as Commander-in-Chief and Minister of Defence. He was not welcome to the Poles—he was the Soviet commander who had halted his armies while tens of thousands of Poles perished during the siege of Warsaw.





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There were already Russian officers in the Polish army, but Rokossowski brought more. Soon the majority of Polish units were under Russian command. Not merely was the pride of the Poles hurt—they regarded the new incursion as an open acknowledgement that the Russians were their masters. It was not without significance that the Russians imposed their military alliance, the Warsaw Pact, their answer to NATO, on their satellites in the Polish capital.

The economic situation caused deep and widespread discontent. The Poles had worked valiantly for recovery from the wartime devastation, but now they saw that the crisis was to continue indefinitely. They were almost completely cut off from the West—save for invaluable parcels received from Poles in exile—and saw no chance of release from their political and economic subservience to Russia.

Nevertheless, the Poles are incurable optimists, and their patriotic spirit burns fiercely. The death of Stalin in 1953, and his subsequent denigration by Krushchev, followed by the famous but not very far-reaching ‘thaw,’ aroused the wildest hopes of freedom. No one knew how this could be achieved, but observers familiar with Polish history could make a good guess.

### **The Rising Tide of Discontent**

In November, 1953, there opened the 11th Cultural Session of Polish intellectuals—writers, artists, and the like. A well-known poet had already prepared the ground, with a public protest against the school text-books in use—they included history books of Russian origin. This started a widespread discussion—not only in cafés and homes, but in newspapers and magazines. Though these were censored, some of the censors were apparently of liberal views and prepared to take risks.

Now, at the Cultural Session, the argument came to a head. The Polish intellectuals expressed their views with a frankness unusual in a Communist state. The effect was electric. The government strove to persuade the intellectuals to recant, but the word had gone all over Poland. Yet nothing practical could be done—the Poles had before them the example of the East German rising of June, 1953, crushed by Russian force.

Nevertheless, the atmosphere had been changed. The death of Stalin, the execution of Beria, and the policy of ‘collective leadership’ had cumulative effects. Bierut resigned as premier (but remained secretary of the Communist Party): the new prime minister, Cyrankiewicz, had entered politics as a Socialist.

Yet in the long run the fate of Beria had immediate practical effects. Josef Lichtig-Swiatlo, one of the leaders of the Polish security service, saw danger ahead and fled to the West. In October, 1954, he began to broadcast from Radio Free Europe sensational disclosures about the horrors of the Polish police state—and the luxury in which the leaders lived. Millions of copies were also dropped in Poland by balloon. The results were unexpected—the Minister of State Security was dismissed, the ministry disbanded, and his leading officials charged with ‘despotic action.’



Then in August, 1955, occurred an incident almost peculiar to Poland. The poet Wazyk wrote his 'Poem for Adults'. The magazine which printed it was confiscated, but copies of the poem were typed and passed from hand to hand.

Few Western countries would be influenced by a mere poem, but similar events had happened more than once in Poland. Its impact was stronger because Wazyk had previously been highly regarded by the Communists. Now he wrote bitterly: the government had erected a huge steel plant at Nowa Huta, near Cracow—he adopted it as the symbol of the new civilization: but the warren of accommodation provided for the workers was not fit for rabbits: how could a man develop his soul, or the spirit of beauty, in such squalor? All moral codes were violated, and officials were blind to everything except the production of steel.

The government was seriously alarmed by the poem's influence on the populace. It is important to realize that the events which followed were not isolated, but followed directly from the intellectual protests—indeed, from the spirit of freedom which had been restricted but never stilled.

In June, 1956, the international trade fair of Poznan was at its height. Hundreds of business men were present from abroad. Since they were there solely for trade, they might not have noticed the disturbed and unhappy atmosphere of Poland. Then it was forced on their attention.

### **The Poznan Riots**

Poznan was the home of the Cegielski engineering works, a large establishment founded by a Pole in German Poland in the 19th century. It manufactured machinery, railway wagons, and other heavy goods. Its workmen had long been discontented: by current Polish standards they were well paid, yet they could not live on their wages. They had many times demanded, and been promised, better pay, but this had never materialised. So in the early morning of June 28th almost the entire staff went on strike, and 15,000 men began to march towards the centre of the city.

They were grim, determined and silent. Soon they were joined by thousands of other workers. One group marched to the Trade Fair, shouting to the foreign visitors: "We want bread—and freedom!". Another raided the jail, released the political prisoners, and obtained arms. A third contingent marched to the headquarters of the hated secret police. A woman waved a Polish flag: a policeman fired at her, but hit and killed a boy at her side: this turned the strike into a riot—almost into a rising.

The police made no attempt to interfere. Polish army units were rushed into Poznan—and handed their arms over to the rioters. At last order was restored. The official account says that 53 people were killed and 200 wounded—certainly an under-estimate.

The Russian premier Bulganin claimed that 'foreign imperialist circles' had fomented the trouble, but the Polish leader Ochab boldly admitted that not 'imperialist agents' but the 'soullessness of

authorities' was to blame. The Russians lectured their satellites severely, but their admonitions were badly received.

For long there had been great argument as well as discontent among the ordinary people; the economic hardships had accentuated the general dislike of Polish subservience to Russia. Now a split was revealed in the Communist party itself. The Natolin group—taking its name from a villa near Warsaw used for government hospitality—were virtually Stalinists. The younger Communist leaders, on the other hand, favoured a policy of democracy. Cyrankiewicz and Ochab agreed with them, but urged a more gradual approach.

### Gomulka takes the Reins

In the confusion, and frightened by the growing popular discontent—80 local strikes followed the Poznan riots—all three sections turned to Gomulka. He was officially rehabilitated as a party member on August 5th. The Natolin group wanted him as a figurehead, but he knew that his moment had come. He insisted on the dismissal of all Stalinists from key positions—and had his way. By the time the party committee met on October 19th, Gomulka, Cyrankiewicz and Ochab were the leaders of the party.

They had to face a strong and unexpected Russian delegation—Kruschev, Molotov, Mikoyan and Kaganovich. Russian troops were marching on Warsaw, and the situation was critical. Students and workers demonstrated against Russian domination. Gomulka stood firm, and made it clear that he demanded an independent and sovereign state, equal to Russia, and able to pursue a 'Polish road to Socialism'.

This implied Poland's control of its own army. Rokossowsky and his colonels must return to Russia. The number and rights of Soviet troops in Poland must be limited.

Kruschev stormed in fury, but he could have had his way only by force of arms. He capitulated. Poland was to remain a member of the Warsaw pact, but was to govern itself.

Gomulka immediately made it clear that his aims were practical. He agreed that the demands of the workers were just, but urged them to be patient. 'Unsound' collective farms might be dissolved. The huge bureaucracy would be reduced, a fair balance between industry and consumer goods was to be struck—and the power of the security police was to be curtailed and subjected to rigorous control.

Gomulka had attained a nation-wide popularity by his stand against Russia. On October 23rd he addressed a crowd of about half a million people in a Warsaw square. He spoke soberly—he is no mob orator—emphasising his difficulties as well as his ambitions. The whole of Poland had been aroused by what seemed to be a revolution: had Gomulka said the word, the nation would have marched. Instead, he appealed for quiet restraint, and a chance to make peaceful reforms. He won: the huge crowd dispersed quietly.

That same night the revolt in Budapest began. It could so easily have been in Warsaw.

## **Grievances to be faced**

The Poles expected great things of Gomulka. The industrial workers, who had long exhibited Socialist leanings, had increased from less than three million to nearly six million. State ownership was familiar to them, but they believed that Soviet exploitation was responsible for Poland's miserable economic plight.

The peasants were also very discontented, and their passive resistance had caused many of the collective farms to fail miserably. The intellectual classes were even less happy under a régime of jargon and mental restriction. Elections were a farce—following the usual Communist practice, the government issued an official list of candidates, equal to the number of seats—and no one else could stand.

The Communists' obstruction of the Church's freedom was deeply resented. Most of the Poles who had fought the Nazis in the West or in the Home Army were barred from employment as "imperialist spies". Despite the historic hatred of Russia, however, the rise of the defeated Germany had aroused new ideas: many Poles were quite willing to maintain their alliance with Russia as a protection against Germany: what they protested against was Moscow's insistence that only a Communist government could be 'friendly,' and especially the Russian domination of Polish economic, political and cultural life.

## **On the Foreign Front**

Gomulka's first acts strengthened the confidence aroused by his defiance of Krushchev. He visited Moscow: while confirming Poland's alliance with Russia—the only effective guarantee of the Oder-Neisse frontier—he arranged for Russian forces stationed in Poland to be limited and to refrain from interference in Polish domestic affairs. Russia agreed to repatriate the Poles still held in forced labour camps—the number had been estimated at over half a million, how many had survived was not known. In the following six months only about 30,000 were actually repatriated.

Gomulka made a determined effort to free his country from Russian economic exploitation. Between 1946 and 1953, Poland had delivered to the Soviet Union about 50 million tons of coal at 1.25 dollars per ton—when the world market price was 16 dollars. The Russians admitted that they owed the Poles 796 million dollars—but there was a counterclaim of 525 million on other accounts. It was proposed to consider the account settled. The Soviet did, however, promise a long term credit of 700 million roubles.

Despite all the hopes of the Poles, it is doubtful whether the Soviet exploitation has yet ended. Since the war the Polish economy has been geared to that of Russia, and the country's new plants have been built to meet Russian rather than Polish requirements. Details of the financial adjustments are conspicuously lacking.

## **On the Home Front**

Gomulka's most striking success was at home. In the first place he realized the danger of continuing to affront the religious loyalties of the nation. Already, on August 26th, the people had given a striking

demonstration of their faith by a great pilgrimage to the ancient shrine of the Blessed Virgin at Czestochowa and the "rededication" of Poland by a crowd of over a million, in the presence of the bishops who were at liberty. This must have given Gomulka a compelling motive for releasing the Primate, Cardinal Wysinski, from his confinement and allowing him to return to his post as head of the Catholic Church in Poland. He also released the imprisoned bishops and priests and granted to the Church numerous concessions: not only freedom of worship but religious education in the schools if parents so desired—and 85% of the Poles promptly opted for it.

In the meantime many of the trappings of the Communist régime were shed. There had been a Communist youth movement, membership of which was virtually compulsory: in a day it disintegrated and ceased to exist. Later a "Socialist Youth" organization was formed and recruited 120,000 members. But the Boy Scouts, who had long been banned, were allowed to revive and they immediately enlisted 200,000 members. By mid 1957 their numbers had reached 800,000.

Yet the most important social effects of the October Revolution were seen on the land. As is usual in Communist countries, the peasants had been treated as subordinate to the industrial workers. The peasants, who had at first been happy in sharing in the break-up of the big estates, had soon been alienated by the forced quotas of produce which they had to deliver to the government at low prices, the scarcity of seeds and fertilisers, and the comparatively high taxation. The aim of those measures was to force them into the collective farms. Gomulka announced that collective farms which were not paying their way might disband, the peasants reverting to their individual plots of land. They seized the opportunity joyously, and the 10,000 collectives soon declined to 1,750. The peasants were further relieved by a reduction in their quota of produce—and the promise that one day it would be abolished altogether—and by the fixing of higher prices. For the first time they ranked economically on a level with the town workers.

Some of the town workers were granted wage increases, which did not however meet the high cost of living. Most of the Polish workers found it utterly impossible to live on their wages. The strikers of Poznan were among the better-paid workers, but when they shouted "We want bread!", that is precisely what they meant.

### **The Present Economy**

It is difficult to translate details of the Polish economy into pounds, shillings and pence.

The official rate of the zloty (which is firmly tied to the Russian rouble) is 11.20 to the pound sterling. There is a special rate of 67.20 zloty to the pound for visitors to Poland—and the black market rate changes from 300 to 450. The only reasonable comparison with British standards is obtained by comparing the work-time necessary to earn a pair of boots or a pound of beef.

The average wage in Poland is about 1,100 zloty *per month*—slightly higher in Warsaw, slightly less in the provinces. Differentials between the wages of skilled and unskilled workers are much wider



than ours. A skilled miner may get 2,500 zloty per month—even more if he beats the ‘norm,’ or standard task for the day: an unskilled labourer gets as little as 700 zloty. Scientists and technicians are highly paid, but teachers and bank clerks get about 900 zloty a month, nurses 770 zloty, and junior doctors 1,000.

For most workers rents are extremely low, but the housing situation is appalling (an average of 2.2 persons per room). Gas and electricity are not over-expensive—about 60 zloty a month in a small flat. Income tax is not heavy—about 10% of income, but the price of every necessity conceals taxation. A glance at a list of ordinary prices reveals the dilemma of a man who is trying to live on 1,100 zloty a month. Here are some examples:

Bread, 4 zloty per kilo.

Beef, 26 zloty per kilo—better cuts 32: pork, 33, ham 50, sausage 20: herrings 18, white fish 30: chicken 80.

Cabbage, 2 zloty per kilo, potatoes 2, apples 7, cauliflower 5 zloty each, oranges 50 zloty a kilo—which works out at about 6 zloty each—or 10/- at the official rate of exchange.

Shirt, 75 to 150, flannel trousers 975, two-piece suit 1,500 to 3,000, shoddy suit 750, shoes 200 (canvas) to 1,200 zloty.

Books, beer and cigarettes are comparatively cheap; Polish whisky costs 100 zloty, a bottle of Scotch 500. Coffee is 300 zloty a kilo.

Any housekeeper with a shopping list will realize within a few minutes that it is quite impossible to live on 1,100 zloty a month on these official prices. They are of course quite artificial, and include a very large purchase tax camouflaged as ‘Socialist Trading.’ This in fact provides the principal source of government revenue. The average Polish income is worth a little over £2.10.0 a week at British prices.

If a wife is able to work, the family budget is improved—but even the double income is insufficient to maintain a family: children’s allowances are made, but they are less than 100 zloty a month per child.

Many men carry out two jobs. A factory will work from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., so that, if a man has the energy, he has the time to earn more money in the evening. Many Poles work an average of more than twelve hours a day.

Those who have no wife fit to work, and no inclination to do a second job, solve the economic problem by cheating and stealing. The Poles used to be an honest people, but the system has lowered private morals. The sense of personal responsibility has decreased. A man who would never think of stealing from his neighbour has no shame in stealing from the State. The temptation is overwhelming. The family of a man earning 900 zloty a month will starve unless he supplements his income. It is easy to be critical about the way he does it.

The Polish Communist government sponsors an economic journal, *Zycie Gospodarcze*. In June, 1956, it investigated the financial resources of average workers. Since then the earnings of *some* grades have been increased by 10%.

The average wage was then 1,075 zloty a month—with a minimum of 500. The cost of a 'food basket'—that is, of essential supplies for the month—was calculated at 348 zloty per adult male—in economic jargon called one standard consumer unit. This would feed him only on bare subsistence level, providing 2,800 calories a day—well below the requirements of a heavy worker. A proportion of the cost of rent, clothing, and other essential services was added: the irreducible minimum, including food, was 548 zloty.

A wife—who of course ate and wore less!—was estimated at .85 of a consumer unit, a child of 14-17 as .8, declining to .5 between 3 and 7. Thus a man, wife and two children represented 3.15 consumer units. Their *minimum* expenditure would consequently be 1,728 zlotys a month.

But this is far above the average earnings. *Zycie Gospodarcze* admitted that "at the most conservative estimate over four-fifths of the labour force employed earn below subsistence level."

The plight of the lower-paid workers—the majority—can be imagined. Even with a wife's earnings and his own additional efforts, the family budget will still be insufficient to meet requirements for sheer existence. The journal stressed that a nation at near-starvation level cannot be healthy, and that higher wages, enough to provide sufficient food, would be better than hospitals and welfare services for those who have broken down in health.

As this was an official report, it is at least clear that the government knows the desperate character of the home situation. Indeed, it is the subject of daily comment in the press. Gomulka, discussing the Lodz tramway strike of 1957, claimed that strikes were useless because they did not produce anything, and that there could be no pay increases until more money was available. It is true that the Polish cake is small, and that disputes over wages will not increase it: but there are many different ways of cutting a cake. At least it should not be possible for certain grades (including some of the Communist leaders) to live in luxury while the bulk of the population exists on the edge of hunger.

Gomulka has reduced the armed forces by 200,000 men. The considerable remainder might not be of much use in an atomic war, and might be a liability rather than an asset to the Russians in the event of conflict with the West. He has begun to slow down the rate of capital investment, so that more can be spent on consumer goods. Yet such steps can do no more than ease the situation very slightly. Most Poles still blame the worst of their miseries on to Russian exploitation. And they hope for aid from the West.

### **The Need for Aid from the West**

By Russian orders, the Polish government rejected Marshall aid when it was offered. Now they want it urgently. Yet there are difficulties. The Americans do not pretend to like Communism: why then should they support a Communist government? If they aid Poland; some of them point out, Russia will benefit; and the worse Polish conditions are, the more likely the Poles are to revolt against Russian domination. The Americans were not encouraged by

incidents of Gomulka's rule—such as the forceful repression of the students' protests.

Others take a broader view. The alternative to Gomulka is not democracy but Stalinism. Further, an economic breakdown might provoke direct Russian intervention. The West has already lost much of its prestige because of its inability to take any action during the Hungarian tragedy. Bitter comments are made about support for Hungarian nationalists being limited to bandages and woolly vests—and about "heroic freedom fighters" who later escaped to the West being refused the right to work by those who should have been in closest sympathy with them. A policy which plunged Poland into a similar disaster would destroy all Western influence in Central Europe.

Gomulka asked the U.S.A. for 300 million dollars: he was granted a long-term credit of 95 million. This will cover the purchase of wheat, fats, cotton and mining equipment. Private credits from British sources amount to 140 million dollars, and France, Canada and Austria have also helped. The Soviet bloc has also granted credits—though less than those granted by the West.

Yet the fact remains that the total is quite insufficient for immediate needs. Further large-scale foreign aid is perhaps unlikely, and Poland will have to work out her own economic salvation. It will be a long and difficult process, calling for restraint as well as effort. Gomulka has not shirked the issue, and has put it plainly to the people. Nevertheless, no Pole is willing to stand by and see his wife and children hungry. If he cannot feed them by legitimate methods, he turns to rackets and theft, and these not only intensify the economic problem but lower his own morale.

### **Gomulka's Achievements**

During his first year Gomulka made good some of his promises. Political persecution is virtually ended: the spoken word is free, though the written word is still heavily censored. The two non-Communist parties permitted to exist are busy recruiting members—the Democratic Party among the professional and trading classes, and the United Peasants Party among the peasants. The Sejm, though not yet a parliament, is already far removed from a puppet manipulated by the oligarchy in Moscow. Western contacts have greatly increased, but the effects of the process of liberalisation in education are very limited. Gomulka remains a Communist, determined on one-party rule, and dependent on the bureaucracy inherent to the system.

His elections of January, 1957, made a hesitant break with the standard Communist model. Instead of a list of candidates equalling the number of seats, there were 723 candidates for 459 seats; but Gomulka had chosen all. He made it clear that any suggestion of opposition would invite Russian intervention. In this he was supported by the powerful influence of the Catholic Church. It was obvious that the alternative to Gomulka was Stalinism; and the vote against the latter was overwhelming.

Gomulka's policy of co-existence with the Catholic Church has proved not only welcome but wise. But one cannot say how long the truce will continue. The Communist organization of "progressive priests" known as Pax has proved a dismal failure; but Gomulka has not yet dissolved it. It is kept up—no doubt with an eye to future use—with considerable funds, business enterprises and relief from taxation. Undoubtedly the Church could be Gomulka's most formidable opponent.

Under their New Deal the peasants are grumbling less. Many are buying additional land—the price of which has greatly increased. By intensive cultivation and such long-term projects as fruit plantations the peasants show their confidence that better times have come.

Yet many of the State industries are virtually bankrupt. Gomulka inherited a precarious economy. His predecessors, who were Soviet-controlled, invested huge sums in plants designed to supply Russia with heavy equipment and arms, but totally unable to supply Poland's own urgent requirements. A completely new and constructive policy is needed, and, even if this were forthcoming, it would take time to develop. But all that Gomulka can do is to talk the stereotyped Communist jargon about greater discipline and stricter controls. There is, in fact, *no* immediate solution to Poland's appalling economic difficulties, but the optimistic Poles would support a plan which promised a higher standard of living. So far it has not been forthcoming.

At the height of the Communist post-war successes, George Orwell declared that its system would either democratise itself or it would perish. If liberalisation of Communism is possible, the Poles are most likely to do it. The opportunities offered by Gomulka's victory over the Stalinists were not wide, but were avidly seized. Now the process is much slower and less sure, and is complicated by internal distresses and foreign tensions. At the moment, the former are more pressing, the latter more dangerous.

## THE INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WESTERN PROVINCES

Even if Gomulka were a Conservative, he would still be tied to Russia. He could break the economic bonds with that country, amidst the plaudits of his people, but even the most democratic Pole realizes that the country is inexorably bound to Russia—the only major power to recognize the Oder-Neisse frontier.

The Poles have confounded many of the German predictions. They have re-settled the New Territories, as they call their "compensation," and with some outside technical assistance have kept Silesian industry going, or even expanding. Yet this has not affected the outlook of the Germans as they recovered from the shock of defeat—and were eventually sought as an ally by the Western nations.

Germany has lost one-fifth of her territory. This was by no means her most valuable region—indeed, there had been a continual exodus



to the more prosperous west for a hundred years.<sup>1</sup> Yet people driven from their homes can hardly be expected not to wish to recover them, and it is only too easy for politicians to seek support by sentimentalising about the sacred soil of Germany in foreign hands.

"Let us put it this way," said a German minister: "Suppose Hitler had won the war—as might well have happened. He might have said: 'Now, you English, I shall confiscate your southern counties, from Kent to Cornwall. I don't need them myself—I shall give them to my friends the Vichy French. The English population will be turned out, to settle in the Midlands and the North.'

"You have lost the war, and must accept his terms. But would you have accepted them in your hearts? Of course not. You would have bided your time, awaiting the moment when by fair means or foul you could recover your lost counties."

"And, should your patience or spirit tend to flag, it would be revived by the persistence of the refugees—one-fifth of your population."

It is true that the 50 millions of Western Germany include more than 10 million refugees, the majority from Poland, East Prussia and Czechoslovakia. The Refugees party lost ground at the 1957 election, but most Germans probably still feel that it is patriotic to demand the recovery of their lost territories.

The Polish viewpoint is also obvious enough. The government propaganda agency proclaims the historic standpoint. It is true that the provinces *were* Polish centuries ago, but any attempt to re-draw the map of Europe on a historic basis would produce far more problems than it would solve.

The government dare not put forward the real basis of their claim—that the provinces were compensation for those seized by the Soviet Union—for fear of offending the Russians. Yet all Poles realize this quite clearly. Their fervent prayer is that the West will recognize their frontiers: until this is granted, their bond with Russia is firm.

Since the *de facto* Polish frontier was fixed, we have become the allies of Western Germany. The Bonn government has consistently refused to recognize the Oder-Neisse frontiers, and has protested strongly against those who did. So far official recognition of them has been confined to Communist countries.

<sup>1</sup>Although the lost provinces had comprised 22% of German territory, they held only 13% of the population, and provided only 9% of the national income and 7% of the industrial production. The agricultural surplus sent to Western Germany was only one-tenth of the local crops. The "flight from the East" had been in progress for nearly a century—between 1843 and 1933 4,509,000 Germans emigrated westwards from the eastern provinces. Hitler attempted to stop the exodus by subsidies, but from 1933 to 1939 another 250,000 left.

The battles of statistics between Germany and Poland are confusing. There was of course much inter-marriage over the years, and hundreds of thousands of people were bi-lingual. Each contestant includes all these people in the figures quoted to back its claims.

The Germans called these people *Wasser-Polnisch*: the Poles prefer the term "autochthones." In general, the mixed populations of Silesia opted for Poland and remained where they were, but in East Prussia large numbers of Masurians found the German claims stronger.

The Communists have always attempted to turn patriotism against the Pope by the argument that he is anti-Polish, because he refused to appoint Poles as diocesan bishops in the Western provinces. Actually, though there is no reason to doubt the Pope's affection for the Polish people, as well as for the Germans, it is not the practice of the Holy See to alter diocesan frontiers or administration in such cases, until a frontier has been definitely fixed by a peace treaty. The Administrators Apostolic originally appointed to attend to the pastoral needs of these areas were removed by the Government, who forced the diocesan Chapters to elect Administrators of its own choosing. These have now faded out and in 1957 Cardinal Wyczinski announced the nomination of Polish Bishops to function in these dioceses but not *of* them.

Doubtless the Western powers would recognize the frontier if Germany ever did so, but at present this is quite unlikely. The Germans claim the inviolability of their homeland, though they disclaim any intention of recovering their lost provinces by force. The Poles proclaim their inflexible determination to retain their disputed provinces, and stress the strong Russian support. The East German government has complacently accepted the frontiers as "fair and just," but would reverse its decision tomorrow if so instructed by Moscow—or if they were allowed a free voice.

The impasse appears to be complete. Yet one day, when the Communists' hold begins to weaken, it must be solved, either peaceably or by war. If the Western powers wish to free Poland from the Russian grip, they will have to persuade the Germans to offer an amicable settlement; it is out of the question for them to recover all their lost territories.

The fall in the vote for the Refugees' Party in the recent German elections suggests that the time is ripe for a re-appraisal of the situation. Economically Germany has small need of the lost provinces<sup>1</sup> but sentiment and pride are not negligible factors: the Poles, who have plenty of both, would do well to heed their influence. A compromise would be better than a war, or even than a long period of political enmity.

## CONCLUSIONS

Poland and Gomulka are both balanced on a knife-edge. The combination of economic chaos and external pressures renders their very existence precarious.

The Poles have behaved with a restraint out of keeping with their national character—which, however, was gravely affected by the tragic siege of Warsaw. Nevertheless, the standard of life is too low: short-sighted men might well demand something better, disregarding the consequences of their action since nothing, apparently, could be worse. A repetition of the Poznan riots might easily serve as a pretext

<sup>1</sup>Indeed, but for the skilled labour of exiles from Silesia and Bohemia, Western Germany could never have made her amazing economic recovery. Stalin's plan in extending the Polish boundaries was to reduce Germany to chaos, which would make a Communist revolution possible. Instead, the final effect was to create a remarkably stable and prosperous Western Germany.

for Russian intervention. The Western reactions to the Hungarian tragedy were not positive enough to serve as deterrents.

Gomulka has lost some of his popularity since he stood up to the Russians in October, 1956. We have known, that he is not a man who wish the alternative—rule by a group are continuously being achieved which could be achieved by Communist party. If the Russians backing, including the Poles, might follow. The Polish hope, would not relin-  
drastic Russian action.

A third possibility is—Germany is—and is likely to suppose the Russians, said to some future Germany yourselves with us. They may even regain your get rid of them for you between Stalin and Hitler. Partition of Poland, with

Poland has deserved uncertainty and subse-  
which encouraged the  
submitted to *force majeure*  
country to Stalin. But  
It is high time that t  
Poland—as a matter of

#### APPEAL

The area of Poland (74,000 miles): estimated population (Germans, Jews, Poles) 515,000. Only 19 towns have more than 10,000 people still live in villages, 1,000: the natural increase is 1,000.

The Polish minority in Silesia. These expatriates of East Prussia had been made to opt for emigration to

Before the war, more than 10 million Poles and few of these have been minorities in all other nations by Russia, only about 10% were dispersed over Russia as Soviet citizens: many

Many Poles emigrated to Poland of Polish descent in U.S.A. and Italians. There are 100,000 in Chicago. They have the

There are large Polish colonies of half-a-million in north of the mining labour force—ex-service men and the Poland.

*The map in the Nov Series) was in error in the Apologies are tendered to*

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World communism in the 20th century.

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Poland and Gomulka are both balanced on a knife-edge. The combination of economic chaos and external pressures renders their very existence precarious.

The Poles have behaved with a restraint out of keeping with their national character—which, however, was gravely affected by the tragic siege of Warsaw. Nevertheless, the standard of life is too low: short-sighted men might well demand something better, disregarding the consequences of their action since nothing, apparently, could be worse. A repetition of the Poznan riots might easily serve as a pretext

<sup>1</sup>Indeed, but for the skilled labour of exiles from Silesia and Bohemia, Western Germany could never have made her amazing economic recovery. Stalin's plan in extending the Polish boundaries was to reduce Germany to chaos, which would make a Communist revolution possible. Instead, the final effect was to create a remarkably stable and prosperous Western Germany.



for Russian intervention. The Western reactions to the Hungarian tragedy were not positive enough to serve as deterrents.

Gomulka has lost some of his popularity since he stood up to the Russians in October, 1956: the Poles have realized, as they should have known, that he is still a Communist. Yet very few Poles would wish the alternative—rule by a Stalinist clique. Some of the Natolin group are continuously intriguing to get rid of Gomulka, an aim which could be achieved not by the Polish people but only by the Communist party. If they succeeded—and they have powerful Russian backing, including that of Krushev—a general rising in Poland might follow. The Poles, after their brief glimpse of freedom and hope, would not relinquish either freely. Yet a rising would invite drastic Russian action.

A third possibility is even more disturbing. At present Western Germany is—and is likely to remain—a loyal partner in NATO. But suppose the Russians, nervous of a revived and powerful Germany, said to some future German government: "Get out of NATO: align yourselves with us. Then you may unite with East Germany—you may even regain your Oder-Neisse provinces. The Poles? We will get rid of them for you." This is no more unlikely than was the pact between Stalin and Hitler in 1939: it would of course mean the Fifth Partition of Poland, with its remnants absorbed as a Russian province.

Poland has deserved a better fate from history than this shocking uncertainty and subservience to foreign rule. The Western powers, which encouraged the Poles to be the first to stand up to Hitler, then submitted to *force majeure* and acquiesced in the handing over of their country to Stalin. But all the advantages are *not* held by the Russians. It is high time that the world considered afresh the difficulties of Poland—as a matter of principle rather than of political expediency.

B.N.

#### APPENDIX—POPULATION STATISTICS

The area of Poland is about 120,000 square miles (England, 50,327 square miles): estimated population 28,500,000, including small national minorities (Germans, Jews, Bielo-Russians, Slovaks, Czechs, and Lithuanians) totalling 515,000. Only 19 towns have a population exceeding 100,000, and more than half the people still live in villages. The birth rate is one of the highest in Europe—31 per 1,000: the natural increase of population is 19 per 1,000.

The Polish minority in Germany before the war exceeded a million, mostly in Silesia. These expatriates retained their Polish characteristics: the Masurians of East Prussia had been more thoroughly Germanised, and more than half of them opted for emigration to Germany.

Before the war, moreover, there were about 800,000 Poles in the Soviet Union, and few of these have been allowed to transfer to Poland. There were also Polish minorities in all other neighbouring countries. Of the Poles in the territories seized by Russia, only about half were able to gain refuge in the new Poland. The rest were dispersed over Russia and Siberia, for during the war they had been treated as Soviet citizens: many of them perished.

Many Poles emigrated before the first World War. There are about 4,500,000 of Polish descent in U.S.A., the largest non-English-speaking group after Germans and Italians. There are 800 Polish Catholic parishes—and half a million Poles in Chicago. They have their own newspapers and schools.

There are large Polish colonies in Canada, Brazil and Argentina—and a colony of half-a-million in north-eastern France, where the Poles form an important part of the mining labour force. Since 1945 about 100,000 Poles have settled in Britain—ex-service men and their families who had no desire to return to a Communist Poland.

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*The map in the November British Survey on Viet Nam (No. 104 in the Main Series) was in error in naming the "Yellow River" instead of the "Red River". Apologies are tendered to the author of the article and to readers—Editor.*

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